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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2415
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1734
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1860
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0455
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1137
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1494
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1916
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4344
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0987
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AF/S FOR S. HILL,
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2018

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SUBJECT: MDC'S BITI ON SADC FAILURE, MDC RECONCILIATION

REF: HARARE 38

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee. Reason: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Tsvangirai faction secretary general Tendai Biti told Polecon chief on January 21 that South African president Mbeki, after four hours of meetings with President Mugabe and two hours with MDC president organ Tsvangirai on January 17, had failed to break the negotiation logjam. The principal issues blocking agreement were the MDC's insistence that the draft constitution be implemented before the election and that the election be postponed. Subsidiary issues were MDC demands that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) be reconstituted (at least with a new chairman), that new registration and delimitation of constituencies take place, that rural chiefs and ZANU-PF patronage in these areas be ended and that monitors be dispatched to ensure this; and that food aid manipulation be ended. (NOTE: Biti said the MDC was not seeking Diaspora voting since it believed ZANU-PF could fraudulently manipulate this. END NOTE.)

¶2. (C) Biti told us MDC leaders met with Mbeki and his negotiating team last weekend in South Africa, following Mbeki's unsuccessful trip to Harare. Mbeki suggested that MDC faction leaders Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara meet directly with Mugabe. Biti termed this idea "ludicrous." He said Mbeki was "full of b.s." and that the MDC had lost all confidence in him. The MDC has formally requested that Mbeki report to SADC and ask SADC as a body to attempt to resolve the impasse.

¶3. (C) Biti was not hopeful that SADC would act. He suggested that the USG privately pressure Mbeki and SADC to place more pressure on Mugabe. He told us he believed a public USG response to the logjam would be premature at this time, but if the talks formally deadlock the MDC believed a USG condemnation of Mugabe would be appropriate.

¶4. (C) On MDC reconciliation, Biti said standing committees

of both factions had met last weekend in South Africa and had agreed to a coalition to contest the March election. The agreement would not be made public until details had been worked out. The ultimate objective, according to Biti, was reunification.

MCGEE